RAF Planes of World War 2

by Philip J R Moyes

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About this book

The pictures in this book cover a wide range of the RAF aircraft that helped to win the Second World War

All the really key types are included in some version or other, and there is also a representative selection of lesser types, although readers will look in vain for the Vickers Wellesley, Saro Lerwick, Fairey Battle, Gloster Gladiator, Bristol Bombay and Lockheed Vega Ventura – just to name half-a-dozen of the "also rans"

Our chief aim has been to bring together a host of good-quality pictures – all carefully selected and in many cases matched to enable direct comparisons to be made – and present them in an appealingly different fashion together with informative captions.

We have produced a photo album for the ex-Service veteran and young enthusiast alike; and if this copy becomes well-thumbed, then our efforts will have been amply rewarded.

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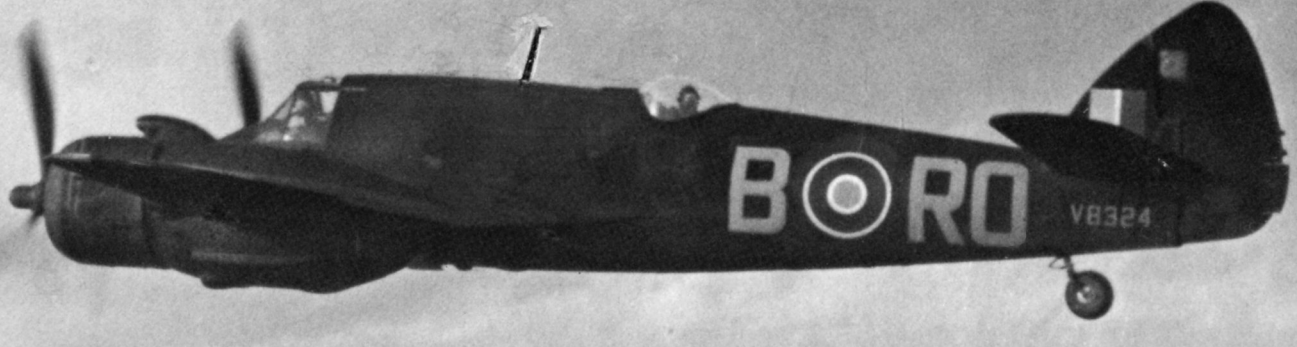
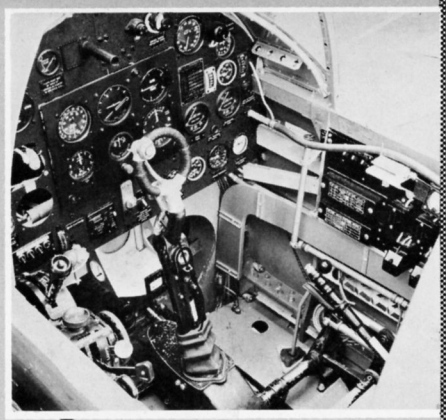


Salute to the Spitfire

Remembered above all else for its part in the Battle of Britain, when it was the only fighter capable of meeting the Messerschmitt 109E on equal terms, the legendary Spitfire was the only Allied fighter to remain continuously in production throughout the war. Over 20,000 were built before production finally ceased in 1947, and from start to finish "Spits" in the RAF flew around 935,000 wartime sorties and 312,000 postwar. They saw action on every battlefront, their various roles including those of interceptor fighter, fighter-bomber and reconnaissance aircraft. Twenty-three main variants were built, and one of the relatively uncommon models was the Mk VII of late 1942 (*left*) usually seen, as here, with increased wing area to improve lift at the high altitudes at which it was designed to operate. The Mk VII was in fact the first major redesign of the Spit to enter production, and like its outwardly very similar predecessor, the Mk VI, it featured a pressure cabin.

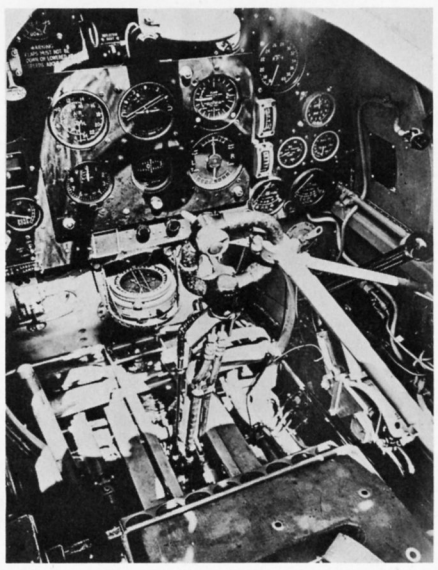
The Focke-Wulf 190 gained temporary superiority over the Spitfire in 1941-42, but when the Spit IX (*below*, in 611 Squadron markings) was put into service in mid-1942 the balance was restored. The Mk IX had a larger Rolls-Royce Merlin engine incorporating a two-speed two-stage supercharger and production totalled over 5,600, with the Spit IX remaining a first-line type right up to the war's end.



BATTLE OF BRITAIN PILOTS' TRAINER

Helping to produce many of the pilots who fought in the Battle of Britain was the sleek 226mph Miles Master I tandem two-seat advanced trainer with a Rolls-Royce Kestrel engine and handling characteristics almost identical to those of the RAF's contemporary Merlin-engined fighters. Altogether, 898 production Master Is were built, and during the B of B some two dozen were converted into six-gun single-seat fighters as stop-gaps but were not in fact used operationally. Two subsequent production models of the Master had radial engines. Note how the cockpit closely resembles that of the Spitfire.

Many of the later Spits had the larger Rolls-Royce Griffon engine instead of the Merlin, one such mark being the Spit 22, (*above*) which entered production in March 1945 but saw no operational use in WW2. First Griffon-powered Spit to see service was the Mk XII (*left*), a special low-altitude fighter hurriedly produced after the enemy had begun to use FW190s with de-rated engines for making "tip-and-run" raids on England's south coast. Just 100 Mk XIIs were built – all with "clipped" wings in their standard Service form, to increase their rate of roll – and they proved an effective answer to the German sneak raiders. *Below*: Cockpit of the Spitfire I.

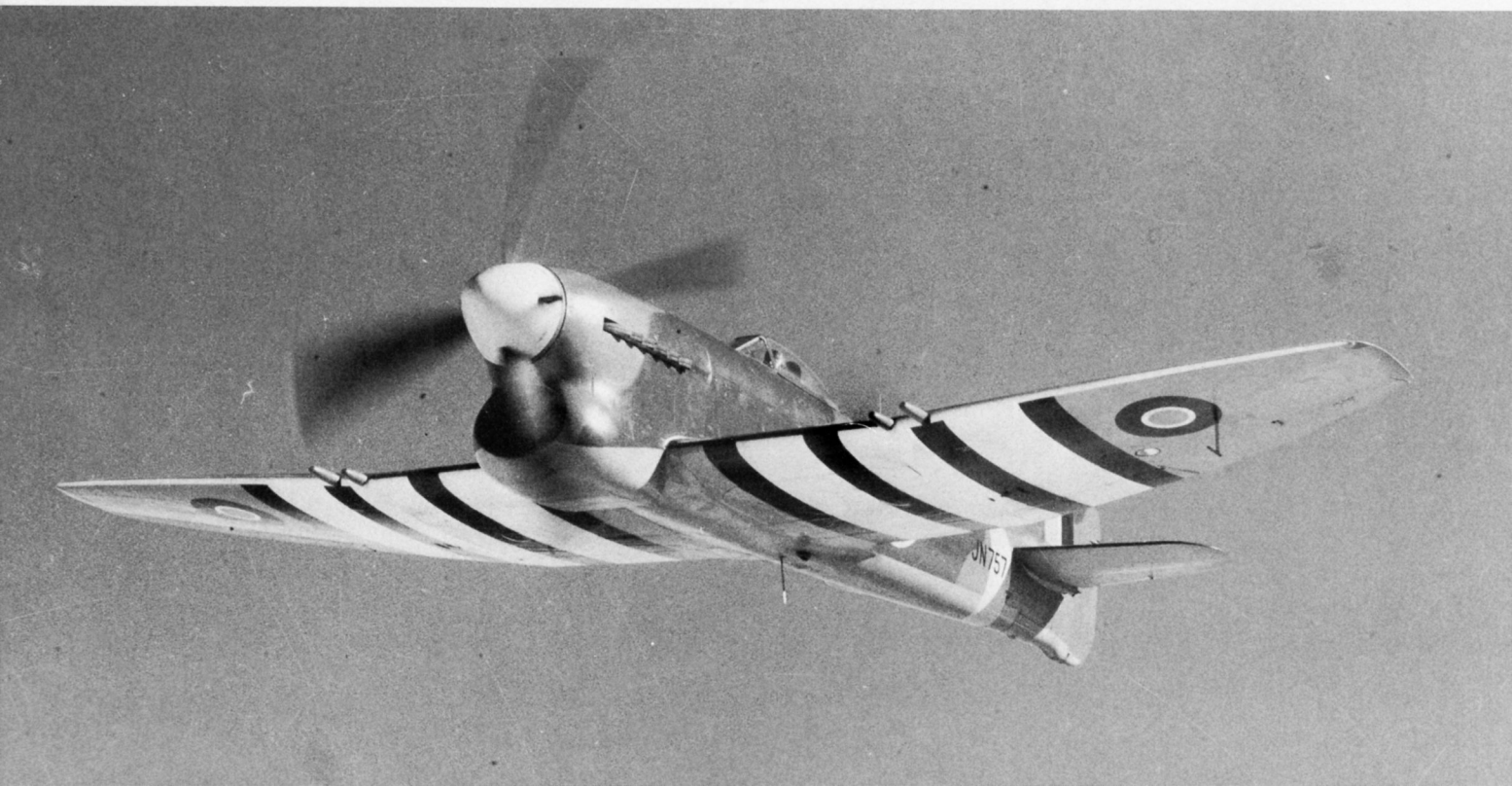


Hurrisome Hawkers

Most famous of all the Hawker fighter breed was of course the immortal Hurricane, world's first operational eight-gun fighter and the RAF's first front-line aircraft to attain over 300mph in level flight. In the Battle of Britain, when it was by far the most numerous British fighter plane available, the "Hurri" destroyed more enemy aircraft than all other home defence elements combined. And as the war progressed it also became very hard-hitting in the ground-attack role, using bombs, rockets or cannon, the latter sometimes being two 40mm weapons, which, as the enemy learned to his cost in North Africa and Burma, could knock out tanks with ease. In all, some 14,000 Hurricanes were built and the type served throughout the war. Seen at right, in a 1943 camera study, is the last Hurricane to be built – the four-cannon Mk IIC PZ865 appropriately emblazoned "The Last of the Many!" and completed in August 1944. Today, this machine – long devoid of armament – forms part of the RAF's Battle of Britain Flight, and carries the code letters of 257 Squadron, which flew Mk Is from North Weald, Essex, during the Battle of Britain.

Below: Rip-roaring low-level portrait of a Mk IIB "Hurribomber" of 402 (RCAF) Squadron which operated this type on cross-Channel offensive sweeps from Warmwell, Dorset, in late 1941-early 1942. This machine is carrying two 250-pounders, but the load could be doubled to two 500-pounders.

Top left: **An early production Typhoon IB being loaded with a 500lb bomb.** ***Top right:*** **An alternative underwing Typhoon load – a long-range fuel tank and rockets.** ***Above:*** **A 250lb bomb being fitted beneath the wing of a Hurricane IIB.** ***Left:*** **Massive looking Typhoon – exemplified here by a late production Mk IB from 183 Squadron – entered service in 1941 and was the RAF's first 400mph combat aircraft. Designed as an interceptor, the problem-plagued "Tiffy" eventually became an essentially low-level operator, for its rate of climb and performance at altitude were disappointing. At low levels it became, in November 1942, the first interceptor fast enough to deal with the Focke-Wulf 190 "tip-and-run" raiders over Britain. Gradually it turned to ground attack – another role in which it excelled – and after D-Day came its greatest moments, when its precision close-support strikes with cannon-fire, rockets and 500lb or 1,000lb bombs speeded the Allied advance from Normandy to Germany** ***Below:*** **Developed from the Typhoon, the Tempest V – only version of the type to see WW2 service – had a top speed of 427mph and in addition to its many successes in orthodox air combat it shot down 638 flying bombs – more than any other fighter.**



MOSTLY BIG STICKS

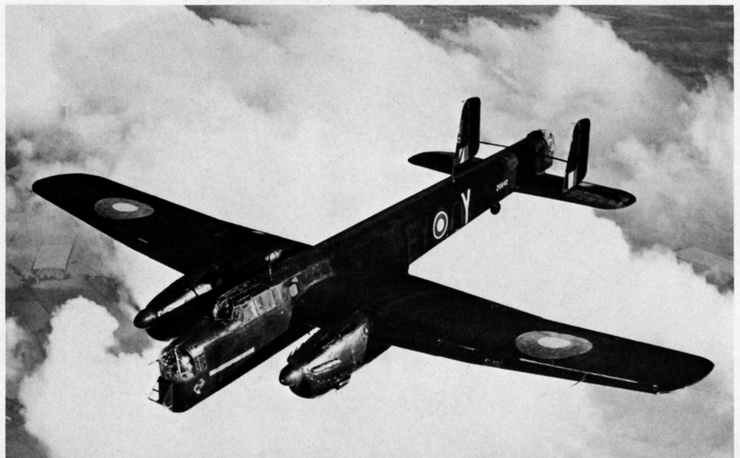
Above: **"Don't shoot, it's one of ours!" A captured FW190 of 1426 (Enemy Aircraft) Flight, RAF, photographed in 1943. Close-cowled BMW radial engine of the '190 was provided with an engine-driven cooling fan (*top left*) and towards the end of the war some British aircraft copied this idea, including the glider-towing Mk IV version of the Short Stirling (*below*) whose Bristol Hercules engines otherwise tended to seriously overheat at low cruising speeds.**

Above: **A Vickers Wellington Mk II – the sole Merlin-powered model to actually see operational use – of 104 Squadron, Bomber Command. In all 11,461 of the various versions of the "Wimpy" were built, and although the type was withdrawn from front-line use with Bomber Command in October 1943 it continued as a bomber in the Mediterranean theatre until the spring of 1945. Other wartime duties of the Wimpy included anti-submarine work, torpedo-dropping and transport.**

Above: **Typifying the standard bomber Stirlings is this Mk I of 1651 Conversion Unit; note twin tailwheels. First of the RAF's four-engined monoplane "heavies", the Stirling began operations in February 1941, but due to performance handicaps it was withdrawn from Bomber Command's main force before the end of the war. All told, 2,381 Stirlings were built, including 11 destroyed during enemy air raids before they had flown.**

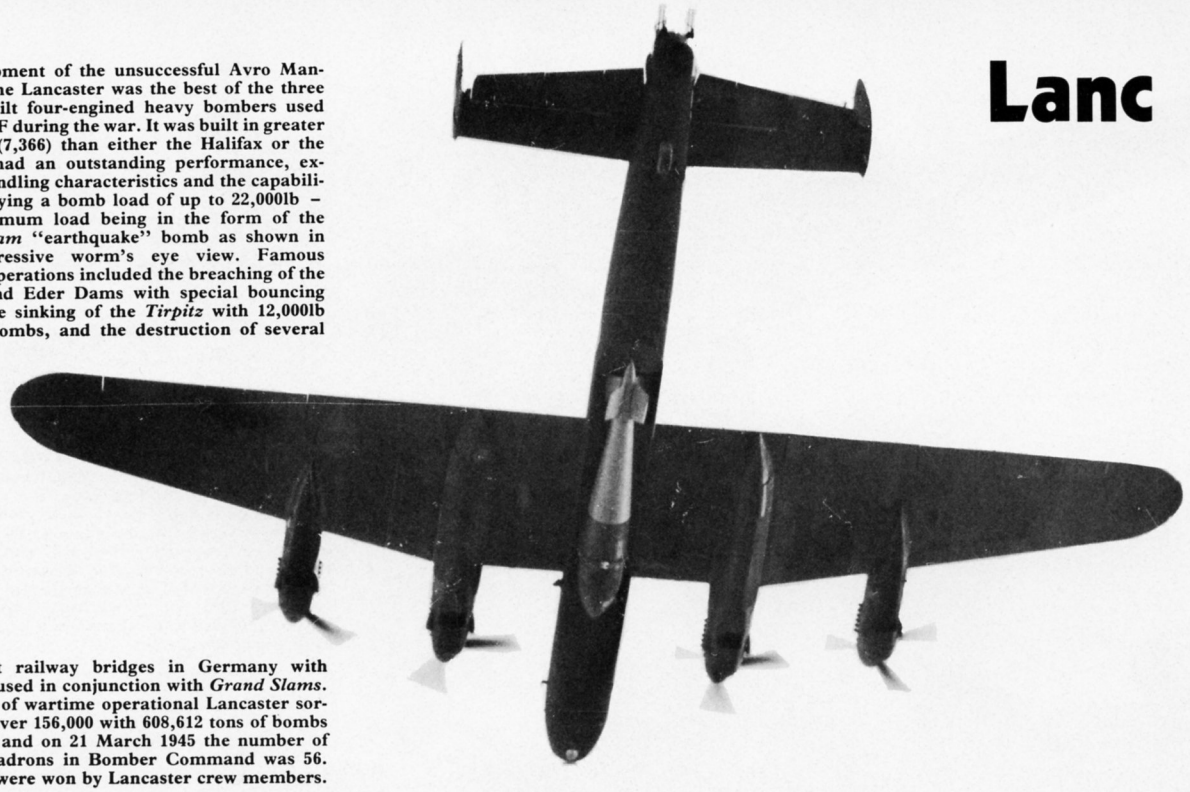
Above: **Avro Manchester – this is the Mk IA – which began to replace the Hampdens of 5 Group, Bomber Command, in 1941, was plagued by engine (Rolls-Royce Vulture) troubles and was withdrawn from front-line service at the end of June 1942, being superseded by the mighty Lancaster which was in fact a redesigned Manchester with four Merlins.**

Below: **Armstrong Whitworth Whitley made most of the long-range leaflet raids in the early months of the war and went on to fly many night-bombing missions before withdrawal from first-line Bomber Command use in April 1942. Whitleys were also used by Coastal Command for anti-submarine duties, and by many units working in conjunction with the Airborne Forces and engaged in glider-towing and paratroop-dropping. Illustrated is a Merlin-engined Whitley V bomber. Some of the earlier models of the Whitley had Armstrong Siddeley Tiger radial engines.**



Lanc and

A development of the unsuccessful Avro Manchester, the Lancaster was the best of the three British-built four-engined heavy bombers used by the RAF during the war. It was built in greater numbers (7,366) than either the Halifax or the Stirling, had an outstanding performance, excellent handling characteristics and the capability of carrying a bomb load of up to 22,000lb – this maximum load being in the form of the *Grand Slam* "earthquake" bomb as shown in this impressive worm's eye view. Famous "Lanc" operations included the breaching of the Möhne and Eder Dams with special bouncing mines, the sinking of the *Tirpitz* with 12,000lb *Tallboy* bombs, and the destruction of several



important railway bridges in Germany with *Tallboys* used in conjunction with *Grand Slams*. The total of wartime operational Lancaster sorties was over 156,000 with 608,612 tons of bombs dropped, and on 21 March 1945 the number of Lanc squadrons in Bomber Command was 56. Ten VCs were won by Lancaster crew members.

Above: The Rolls-Royce Merlin was the Lanc's standard powerplant, but the 200 Lanc IIs built as an insurance against a once seemingly possible shortage of Merlins had Bristol Hercules radial engines. This example was photographed in 1943 while serving with 426 (RCAF) Squadron of Bomber Command.

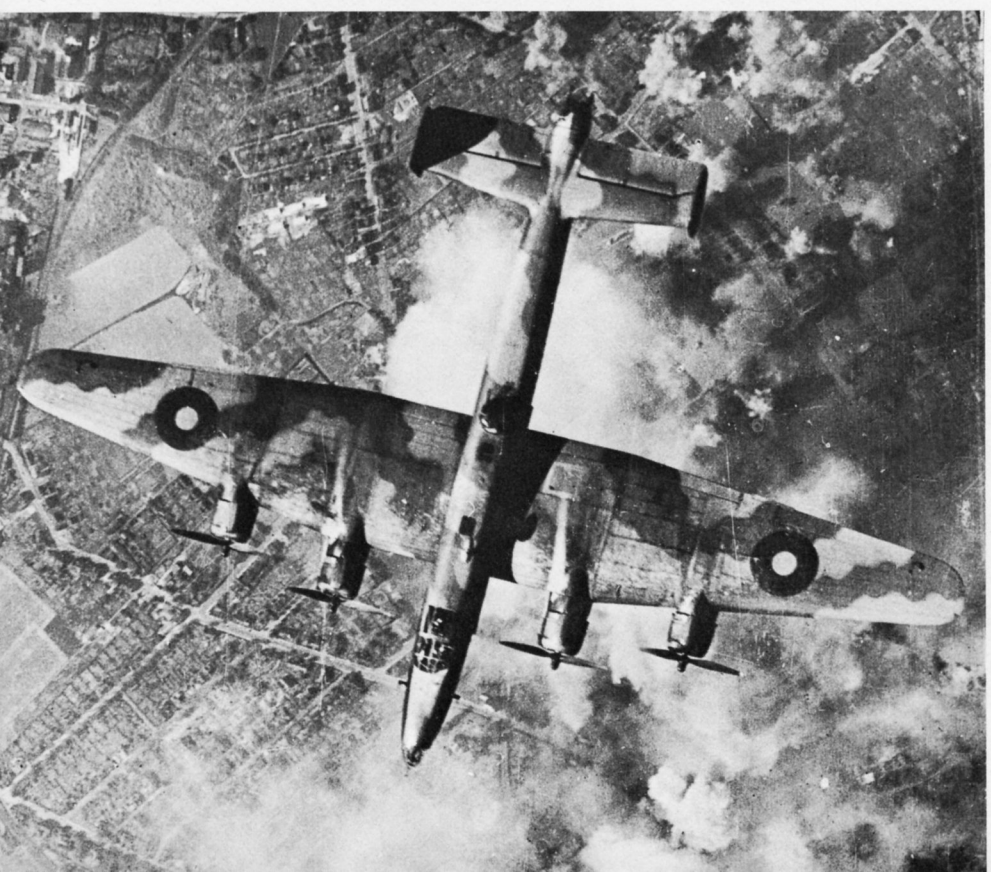
Right: Brand new Lancs fresh off the assembly line.

Below: Nose of Bomber Command's champion Lanc – Mk III ED888 "Mike Squared" or "Mother of them All" of 103 and 576 Squadrons which completed 140 operational sorties and survived the war.

Halibag

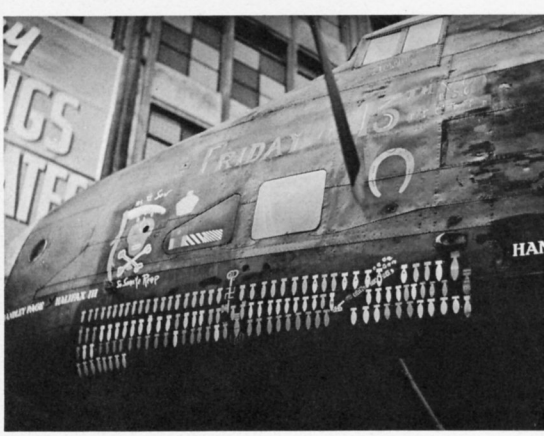
Sharing with the Lanc the bulk of Bomber Command's night offensive against Germany for much of the war and until victory came was the Handley Page Halifax which existed in many forms, some with Merlin and later models with Hercules engines. Over 6,000 were built including paratroop, glider-towing, transport and maritime reconnaissance versions, the bomber models flying 91,773 operational sorties and dropping 224,207 tons of bombs with Bomber Command alone (other bomber "Halibags" served in the Mediterranean and Far East theatres). *Left:* Brand new Hercules-engined Halifax bombers awaiting delivery to the RAF.

Below: **A Merlin-powered Halifax BII of 78 Squadron of Bomber Command, one of the 60 units which flew Halibags during the war. A Halifax BII of 35 Squadron (the original Halibag unit) which force landed on a frozen lake in Norway in 1942 and subsequently sank was salvaged in 1973 and transported home to England to undergo restoration on behalf of the RAF Museum, this machine being the only Halibag known to exist.**

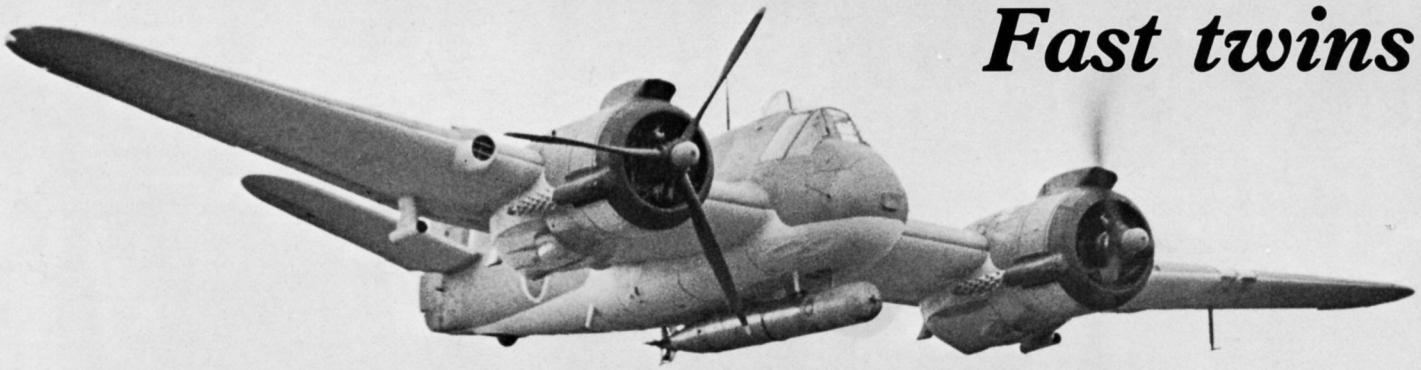


Left: **Plan view of a Hercules-powered Halifax of Bomber Command over the target during a daylight raid on Wanne Eikel, in the Ruhr, during the closing stages of the war.**

Below: **Nose of Bomber Command's top-scoring Halifax, BIII LV907 *Friday the 13th* which completed 128 operational trips with 158 Squadron and survived the war. The panels bearing the nose artwork can today be seen in the RAF Museum at Hendon.**

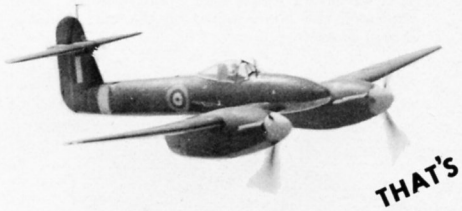


Fast twins

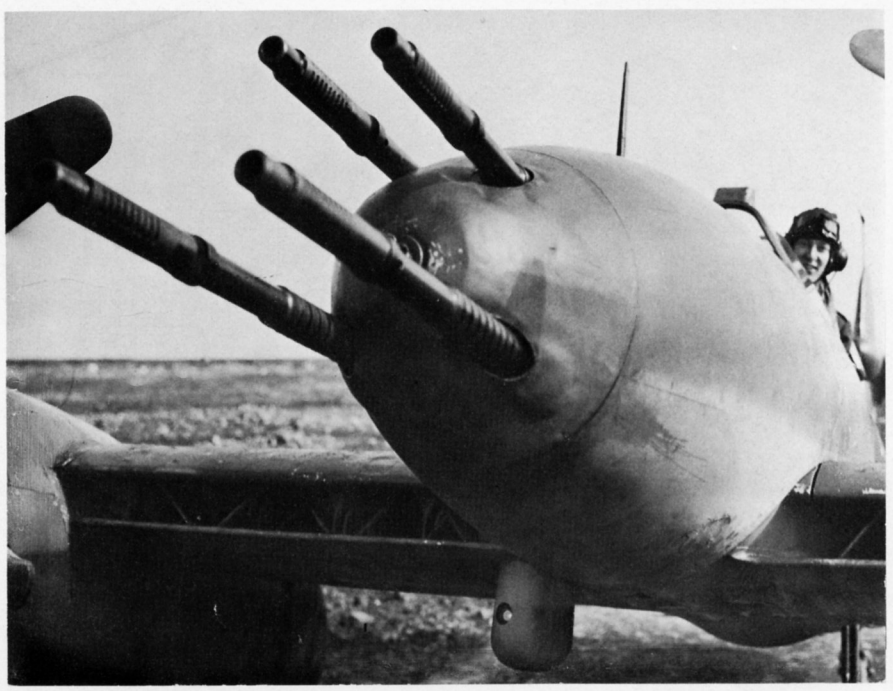


Above: "Beau" with one feathered. Bristol's rugged, four 20mm cannon-armed Beaufighter, usually with Hercules engines as here, but with Merlins in its Mk II form, operated in various roles, first as a radar-equipped night fighter in 1940. It later became a successful fighter-bomber, rocket-armed fighter and torpedo aircraft, serving in Britain, the Mediterranean and the Far East – in which latter the Hercules Beau's trick of surprising the Japs with a fast near-silent low-level approach earned it the nickname of "Whispering Death".

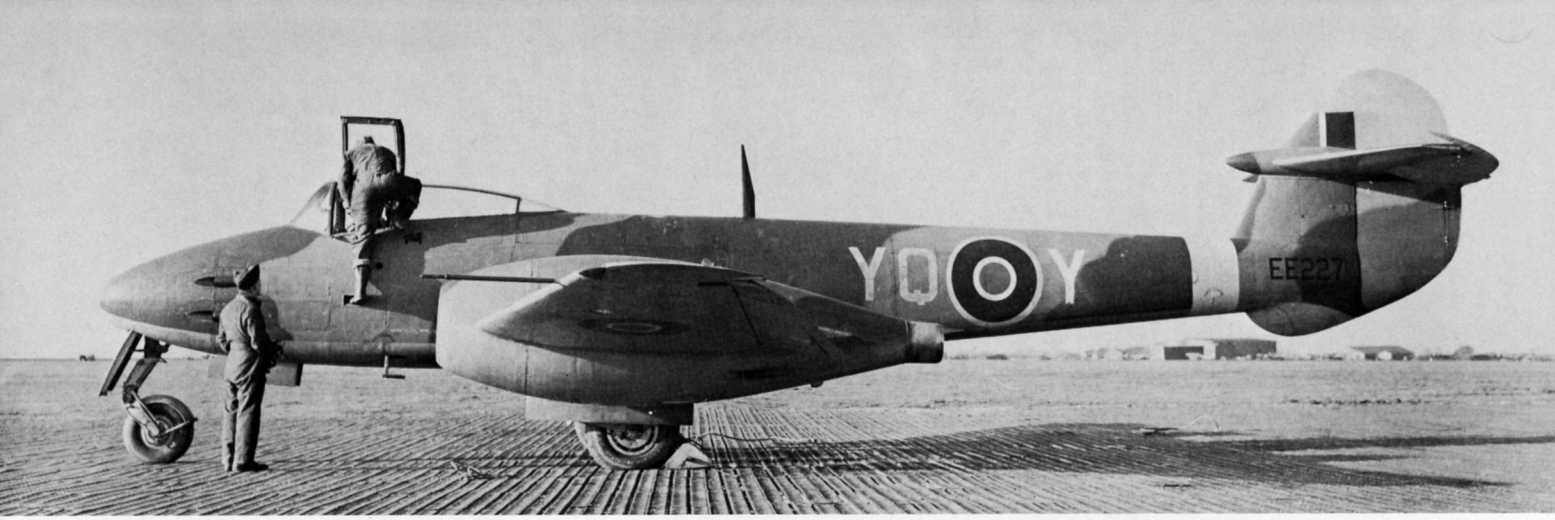
CRIKEY!



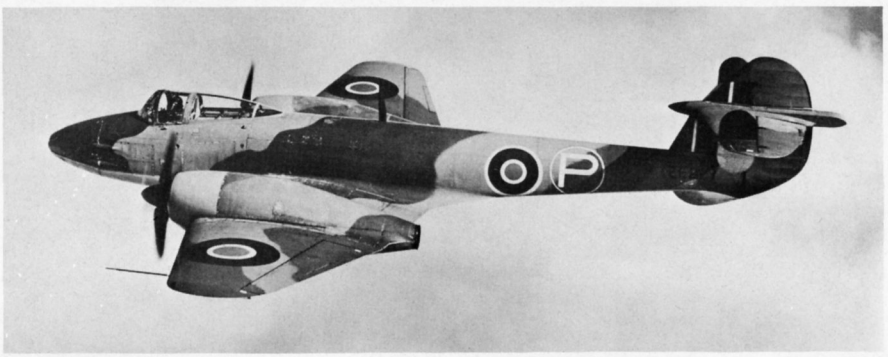
First single-seat twin-engined fighter to serve with the RAF, the Westland Whirlwind could outpace the Spitfire at low altitude in its early days; and, on seeing the prototype flash past at a high rate of knots during a test flight from Westland's Yeovil, Somerset, airfield a local garage proprietor bestowed the nickname "Crikey" on the machine in deference to the well-known Shell advertisement of the time (shown *above* with the Whirlwind especially added by our studio). The Whirlwind packed a devastating punch in the form of four closely-grouped 20mm cannon, but as it lacked the necessary range for its intended role of escort fighter, production was limited to 114, and the aircraft was eventually relegated to cross-Channel fighter-bomber operations (*below*)



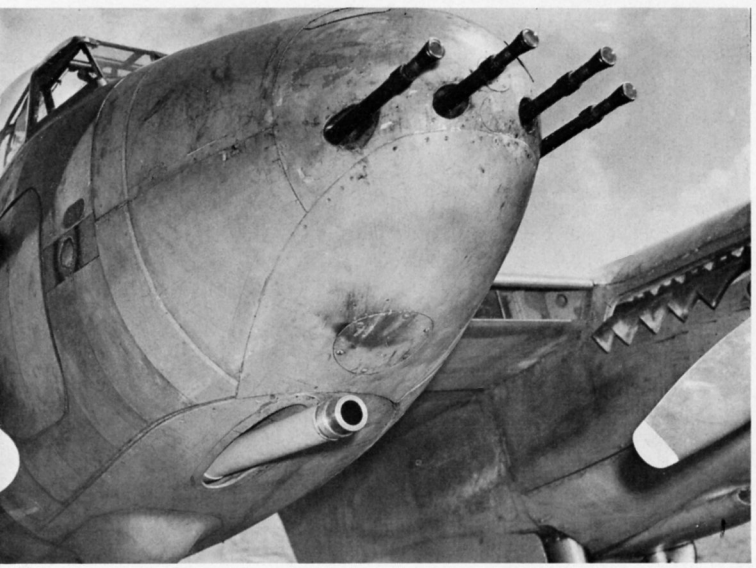
Below: Only two squadrons were equipped with the Whirlwind – Nos 263 and 137, one of the latter's machines being shown – and the type was operational from December 1940 until the end of 1943.

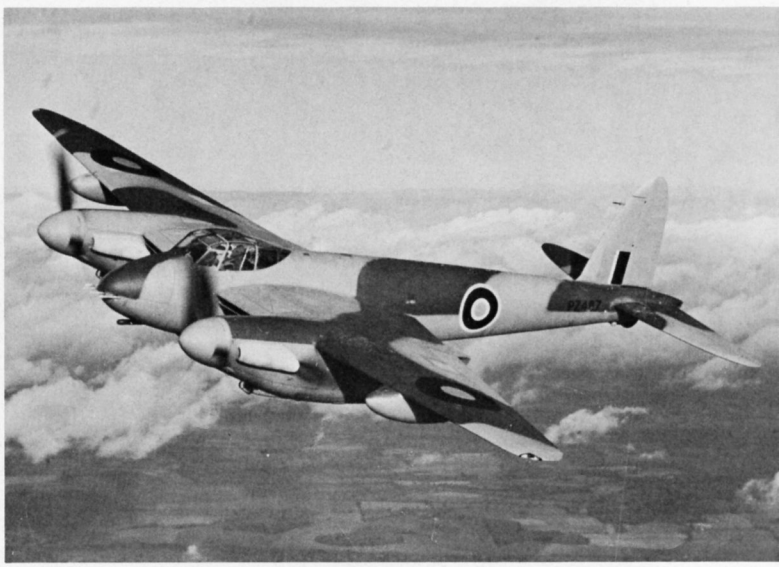


Above: First Allied jet fighter – the 410mph Gloster Meteor I, here exemplified by EE227 of the first squadron to be equipped, No 616, which took the jets into action against the flying bombs in 1944 and in the following year flew Meteor IIIs on ground attack ops from Continental bases.



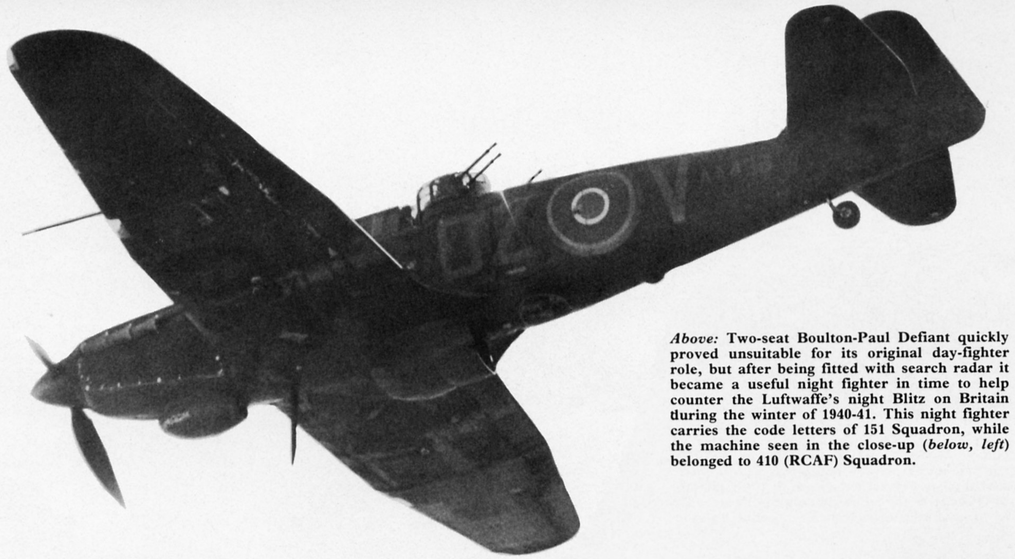
Right: EE227 became the world's first turboprop aircraft to fly in September 1945 when it assumed the role of flying test bed for the Rolls-Royce Trent.



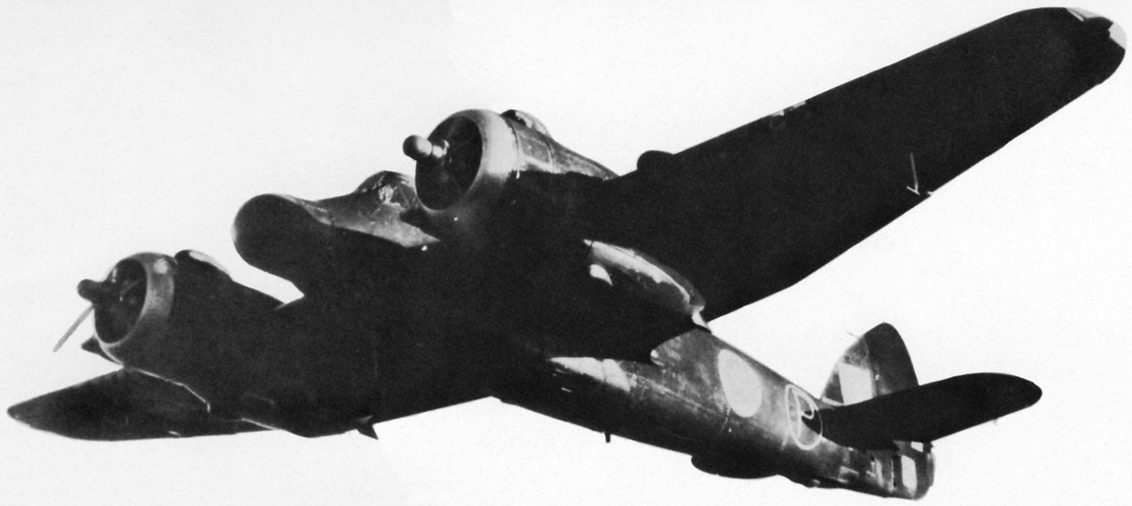


Above and above right: One of the most versatile aircraft of the war was the de Havilland Mosquito – the "Wooden Wonder" – first used for photographic reconnaissance in 1941 and an equally effective day and night bomber, fighter-bomber and night fighter. The FBXVIII (illustrated) carried a six-pounder 57mm cannon instead of the fighter's more usual four 20mm cannon and was used for anti-shipping and U-boat strikes.

Below: Fastest of the American twins used operationally by the RAF in WW2 were the Mk IV and V models of the Douglas Boston bomber, each with top speeds of around 329 mph. Seen here is a Boston IV carrying bombs on underwing pylons.



Above: Two-seat Boulton-Paul Defiant quickly proved unsuitable for its original day-fighter role, but after being fitted with search radar it became a useful night fighter in time to help counter the Luftwaffe's night Blitz on Britain during the winter of 1940-41. This night fighter carries the code letters of 151 Squadron, while the machine seen in the close-up (*below, left*) belonged to 410 (RCAF) Squadron.



NIGHTPROWLERS

Above and below: Bristol Blenheim Mk IF night fighter, first adapted from the obsolete Blenheim I day bomber in 1939, featured a four-gun belly pack and eventually had search radar as evidenced by the nose and wing aerials on the machine pictured in flight – from 54 Operational Training Unit.

Above: The Mosquito FII, first of the "Mozzie" night fighter variants, with radar aerials on nose and wing-tips and the standard fighter-Mozzie-type flat bullet-proof windscreen. *Left:* A pilot and his observer going aboard a 605 Squadron Mosquito FII for a night intruder sortie in 1943.

Above: A pugnacious-looking Beaufighter Mk IF two-seat night fighter with its Air Interception search radar housed in a thimble nose. In Fighter Command, Beaus supplemented and gradually superseded the radar-equipped Blenheim IFs and Defiants, but eventually they themselves were superseded by the faster Mosquito, *Left:* A crew member of a Beau entering the aircraft via the type's swivelling door-cum-escape hatch.

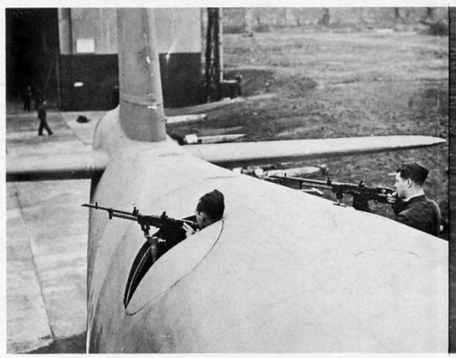
Below: Night prowler from Uncle Sam – a Douglas Havoc Mk I (Intruder) of 23 Squadron as used for nocturnal strikes against enemy airfields and other targets in the Low Countries and northern France. *Left:* Pilot of a Havoc Mk I (Intruder) getting out of his aircraft.

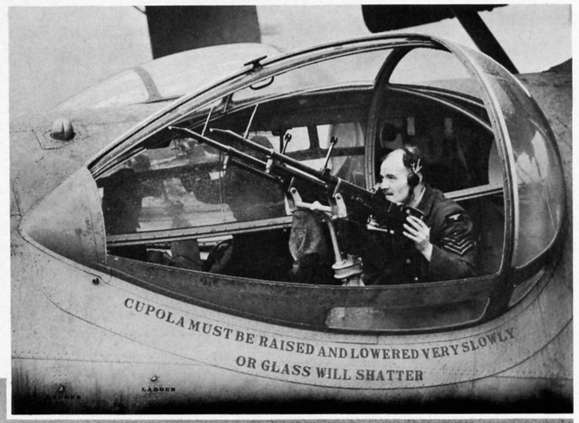
U-BOAT HUNTERS

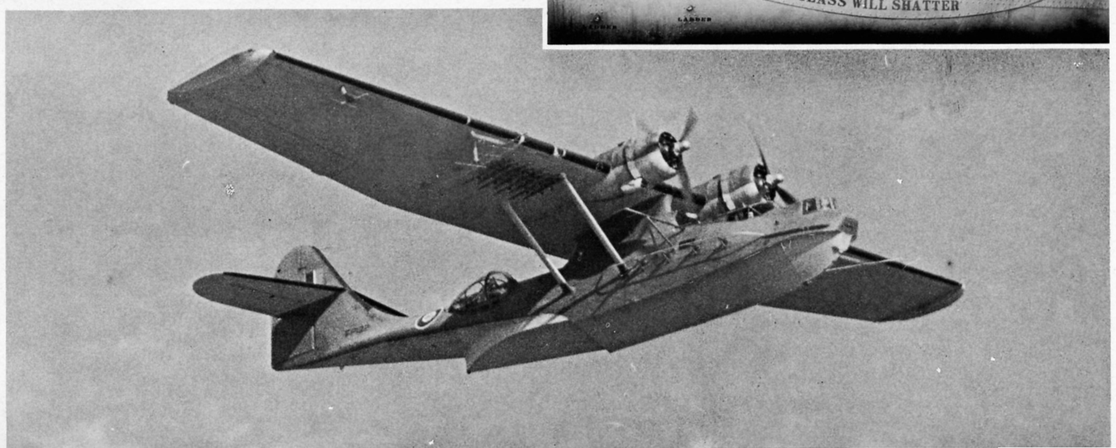
The Short Sunderland flew anti-submarine patrols with Coastal Command and overseas commands throughout the war, and was responsible for sinking 37 U-boats (probably sinking two more) and seriously damaging 19 others. It was the first RAF flying boat to have power-operated nose and tail gun turrets, and some models, including the Mk IV seen here, had dorsal turrets and/or additional guns mounted in the bows and in beam positions amidships. Because of its strong defensive armament the Sunderland became known to the Germans as the "Flying Porcupine" and one machine, attacked by six Junkers 88s, shot down one, forced another to land in Norway and drove the rest away.

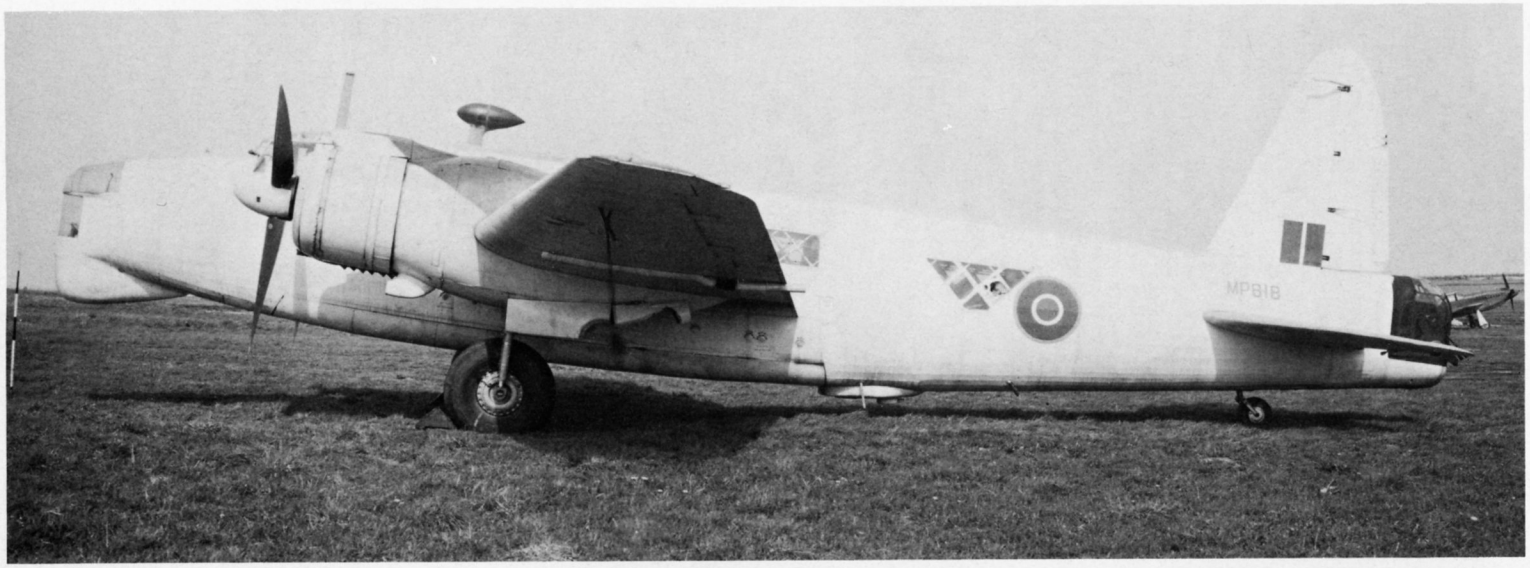
Above: U-boat kill by a Sunderland. Depth charges and machine-gun fire straddle the unlucky *U-243* which later dived to its death. *Below, left:* Close-up of gun positions in upper part of a Sunderland Mk I's hull amidships. *Below, second from left:* A Sunderland Mk II of 10 (RAAF) Squadron equipped with Air-to-Surface Vessel radar (some of the aerials have been deleted from the photo by wartime censor) and gun positions amidships. *Immediately below:* "Cat's" claws – starboard amidships gun cupola of a Consolidated Catalina Mk I flying boat containing two .303in machine-guns. Eventually each cupola mounted a single .5in machine-gun instead. *Bottom:* The Catalina first joined RAF squadrons in 1941 and was particularly noteworthy for its excellent range, as exemplified by the 19 to 22 hour patrols made by RAF Cats from Northern Ireland during their search in May 1941 for the German battleship *Bismarck* hiding somewhere in the Atlantic after sinking HMS *Hood*. It was in fact a RAF Catalina that eventually found the *Bismarck*; another Cat then took up contact, and the *Bismarck* was soon caught and destroyed by the Royal Navy. Illustrated is a Catalina Mk IB.

Below: The Lockheed Hudson – a Mk III of 48 Squadron, Coastal Command, is shown – was the first American aircraft to see operational service with the RAF in WW2. The versatile Hudson had many roles, including anti-submarine and shipping duties, transport (including flights to enemy-occupied territory to deliver and collect secret agents) air/sea rescue (for which role a parachutable lifeboat could be fitted) and meteorological reconnaissance. On 8 October 1939 a Hudson of Coastal Command became the first RAF plane operating from the UK to shoot down an enemy aircraft – a Dornier 18 flying boat, over Jutland – whilst in August 1941 another Hudson of Coastal accepted the surrender of U-boat *U-570* after having attacked it with depth charges and machine-gun fire. *Below, right:* Twin-gun dorsal turret of a Hudson.

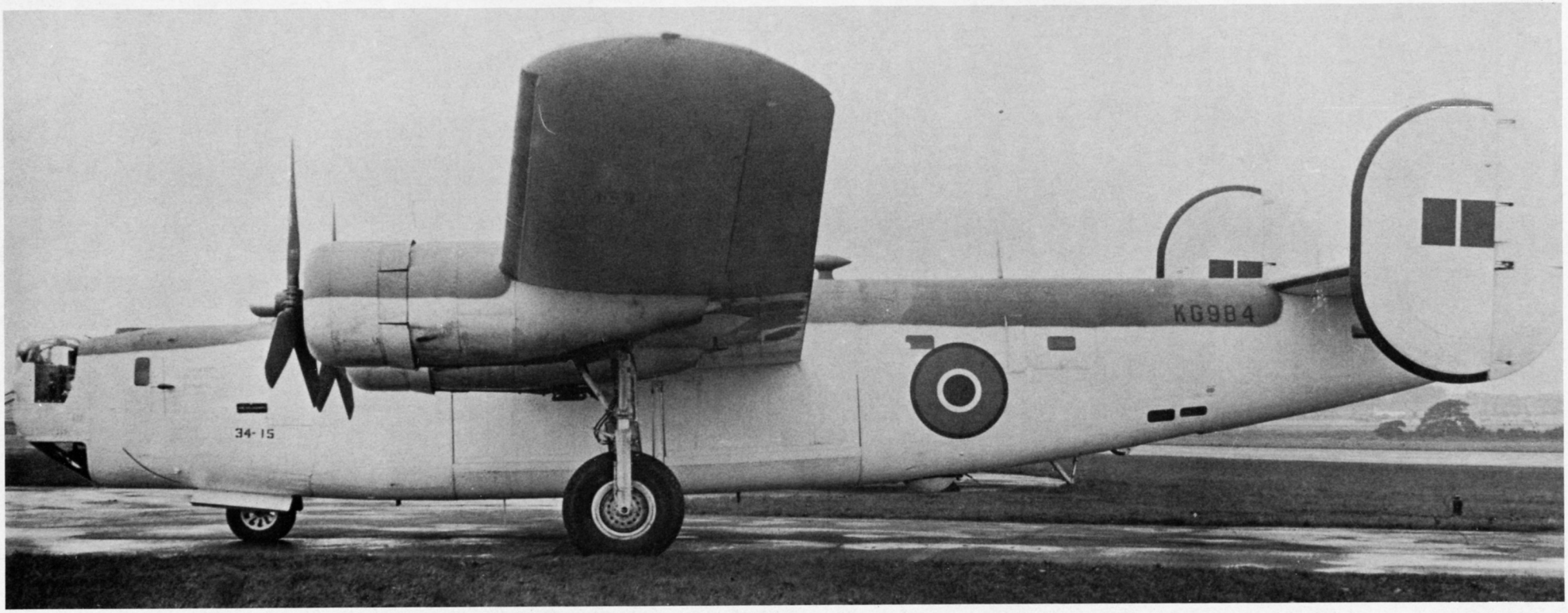








Other types which played a big part in the relentless war against the U-boats included the Wellington (*left*, in GR Mk XVII form), Liberator (*below*, in GR Mk VI guise), Whitley, Halifax and Fortress.

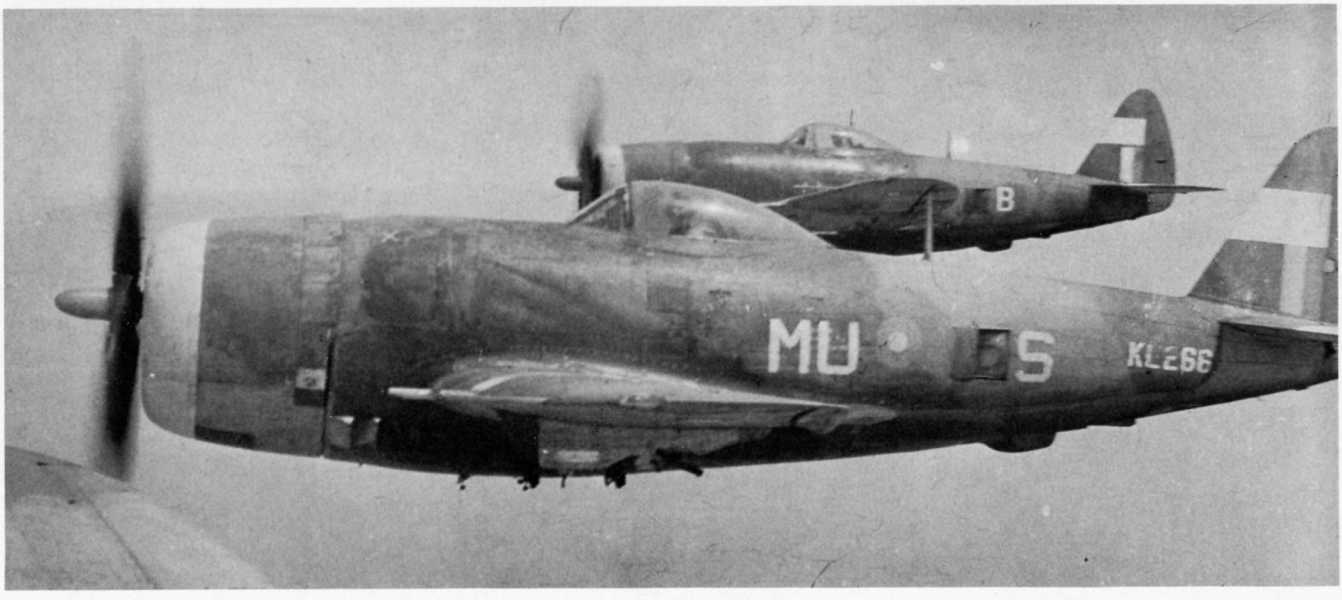


Fighters from America

Above: First in action with 112 Squadron – two of whose Mk Is are shown, before receiving unit markings – the RAF's Curtiss Kittyhawks fought exclusively in the Mediterranean theatre, doing particularly good work in the fighter-bomber role. The Kittyhawk was a development of the earlier Tomahawk, which latter saw considerable use in Northern Europe with UK-based army co-operation squadrons and also in the Mediterranean theatre.

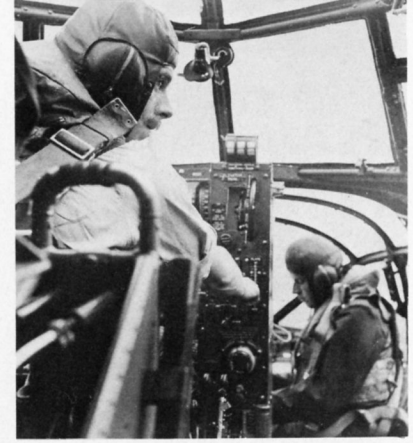
Left: Used by the RAF from 1942 onwards, the North American Mustang was designed to British specifications, the Allison-engined Mks I and II serving in the fighter-reconnaissance role and the Merlin-powered Mks III and IV undertaking normal fighter duties. This pair of Mk Is belonged to 2 Squadron of Army Co-operation Command, based in the UK.

Below: Hefty, rugged Republic Thunderbolt entered RAF service in 1944 and saw combat duty exclusively in the Far East, its strikes with bombs and large-calibre machine guns creating havoc among Jap troops and supply lines. MU-S and MU-B are Mk IIs – equivalent to the USAAF's P-47D-25 – of 60 Squadron.



ALL FOR ADOLF

A "tin-fish" arrives for a Bristol Beaufort Mk I torpedo-bomber of 42 Squadron, Coastal Command, in 1941. RAF Beauforts saw action over the North Sea, the English Channel, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Flying Officer Kenneth Campbell of 22 Squadron was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in a torpedo attack in a Beaufort against the German battleship *Gneisenau* in Brest harbour on 6 April 1941; the attack nearly sank her and kept her out of commission until the end of the year. *Inset:* A Beaufort pilot and navigator at their stations.



Above: A test pilot at the controls of a Hampden.

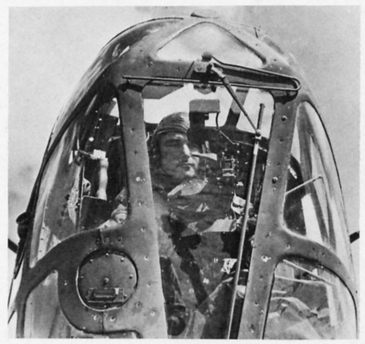
WAAFs deliver sea mines to Handley Page Hampdens of 408 (RCAF) Squadron of Bomber Command in 1942. The Bristol Pegasus radial-engined Hampden saw action with Bomber Command from September 1939 to 1942 and then continued to harrass the Hun in the new role of torpedo bomber with Coastal Command until December 1943. A variant of the Hampden, the Hereford, had Napier Dagger in-line engines but was only used for training purposes.

"Train" of trolleys carrying a 2,000lb blast bomb and cases of incendiaries draws up in front of a Halifax Mk II series IA of 408 (RCAF) Squadron, Bomber Command, in 1943. *Inset:* View inside forward fuselage of an early Merlin-powered Halifax bomber.

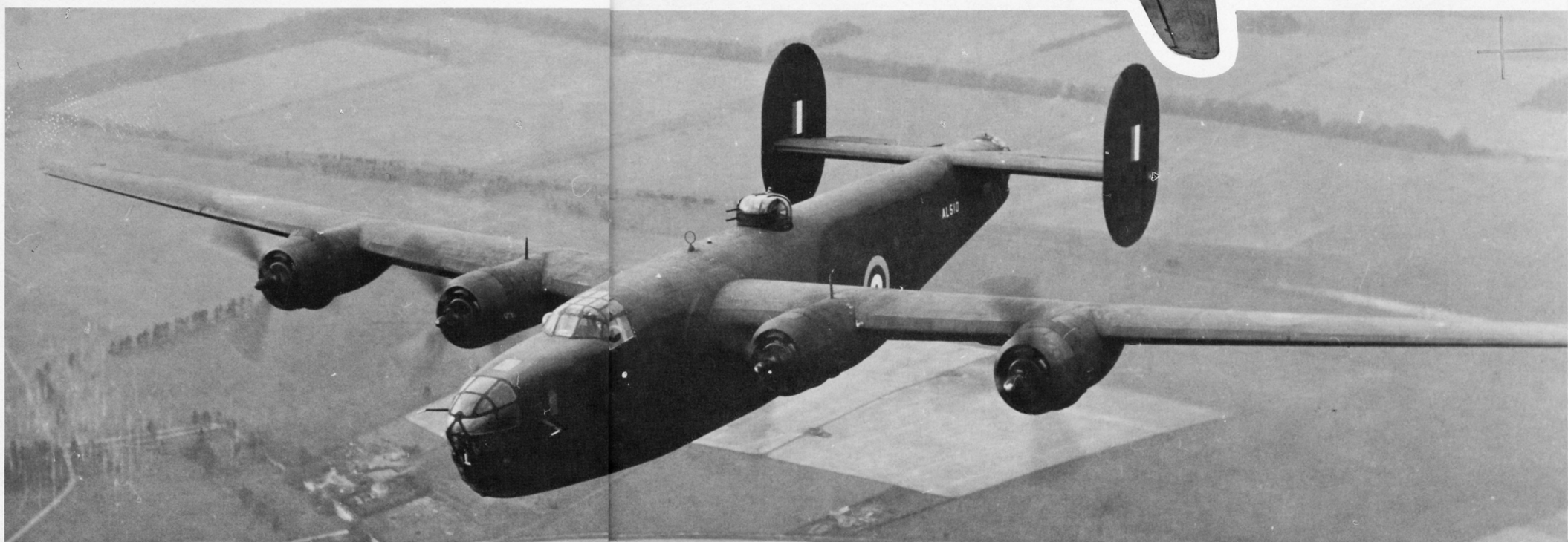
Above: Mosquito BIV, first of the unarmed Mozzie bombers, first went into action on 31 May 1942 when it attacked Cologne in daylight as a follow-up to the RAF's "thousand bomber" raid on that city the previous night. Originally intended to carry a 1,000lb bomb load, the Mozzie doubled this, then doubled it again so that in its later versions, beginning with the specially-modified Mk IV with bulged bomb bay, it could carry a 4,000lb "cookie" blast bomb to Berlin and return to a British base.

Bomber trio

Right and below: First of the various RAF versions of the Consolidated Liberator to be employed essentially as a bomber of land targets was the Mk II, typified by the black-bellied examples shown, which was deployed to the Mediterranean theatre and began operations in 1942. Other Mk II "Libs" served with Coastal Command on essentially maritime tasks, including anti-submarine patrol, continuing the work begun in 1941 by that command's Mk Is.



Left and far left: The RAF's Douglas Boston bomber (not to be confused with night-fighter and intruder variants) flew its first operational sorties on 12 February 1942 when ten machines of 88 and 226 Squadrons took part in the search for the German warships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* during their famous Channel dash from Brest. The Boston III bomber in the flying shot carries the code letters OM of 107 Squadron, which also operated over northern Europe, but some Boston bombers operated in the Mediterranean theatre. Nose close-up with bomb-aimer is also a Boston III.



More hard-working twins

Avro Anson, or "Faithful Annie" as it was affectionately known, did good work as a maritime patrol bomber with Coastal Command in the early part of the war but was superseded by the far superior Hudson and is best remembered for its far more widespread work as a crew trainer and utility transport. This machine is a Mk I of 1 Air Gunnery School.

Airspeed Oxford made a very great contribution to the war effort, for it was the standard – though not sole – twin-engined trainer, the Mk I being used for all aspects of aircrew training, including gunnery (when a dorsal turret was installed), while the Mk II was employed mainly for pilot training. Oxfords were also used as air ambulances, communications, anti-aircraft co-operation aircraft, etc. This Mk I "Oxbox", seen preparing to land, belonged to the Empire Central Flying School.

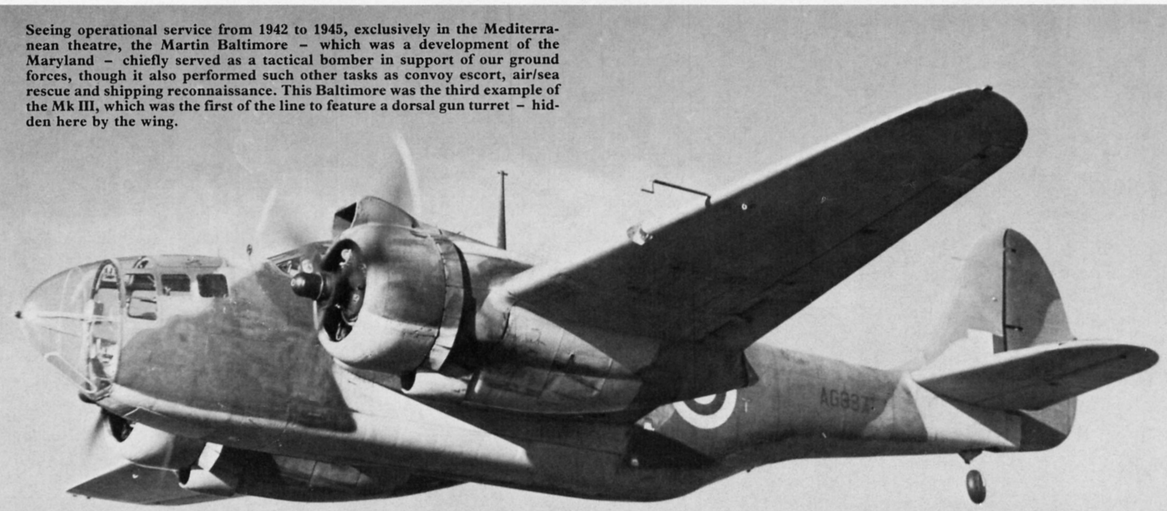
With a front-end resembling the long-nosed Blenheim IV, the Armstrong Whitworth Albemarle was originally intended to be a bomber, but in fact was employed as a glider-tug and special transport with the Airborne Forces. Albemarle glider tugs were first used operationally in the invasion of Sicily and later took part in the invasion of Normandy and the Airborne landings at Arnhem. P5-S is an ST Mk V of 297 Squadron and carries the special wing and fuselage black and white recognition stripes introduced on many Allied aircraft in connection with the Normandy invasion.

Virtually an enlarged Wellington, the Vickers Warwick was never used in its originally-intended bomber role, but instead became a very useful air/sea rescue plane – for which purpose it carried a parachutable lifeboat, as was the case with this invasion-striped Warwick ASR Mk I of 282 Squadron – and also a transport (sometimes with a ventral freight pannier) and reconnaissance plane.

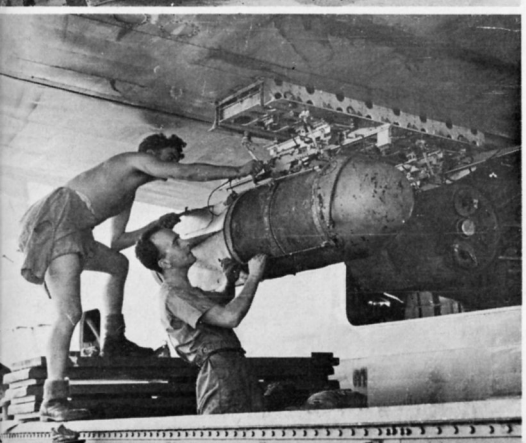
Most famous of all military transport planes, the Douglas C-47/C-53 developments of the DC-3 airliner entered RAF service in substantial numbers in 1943 and, as Dakotas, operated as troop and freight transports, ambulances, glider-tugs and paratroop carriers. This Dakota is a Mk III, counterpart of the USAAF's C-47A, and was one of many "Daks" operated by British Overseas Airways Corporation – sometimes on behalf of RAF Transport Command.

The RAF's North American Mitchell bomber – an invasion-striped Mk II of 98 Squadron is shown – was used initially by 2 Group of Bomber Command, later joining the 2nd Tactical Air Force and, from D-Day onwards, operating in close-support of the invading Allied armies on the Continent.

Seeing operational service from 1942 to 1945, exclusively in the Mediterranean theatre, the Martin Baltimore – which was a development of the Maryland – chiefly served as a tactical bomber in support of our ground forces, though it also performed such other tasks as convoy escort, air/sea rescue and shipping reconnaissance. This Baltimore was the third example of the Mk III, which was the first of the line to feature a dorsal gun turret – hidden here by the wing.



Giving excellent wartime service as a "flying classroom" for wireless operators, and also as a light transport, was the de Havilland Dominie, militarised version of the famous Dragon Rapide airliner which first appeared in 1934. In addition to machines built as Dominies, many of the pre-war Rapides were commandeered during the war for RAF duties. This pair of Dominie Is served with 2 Radio School.



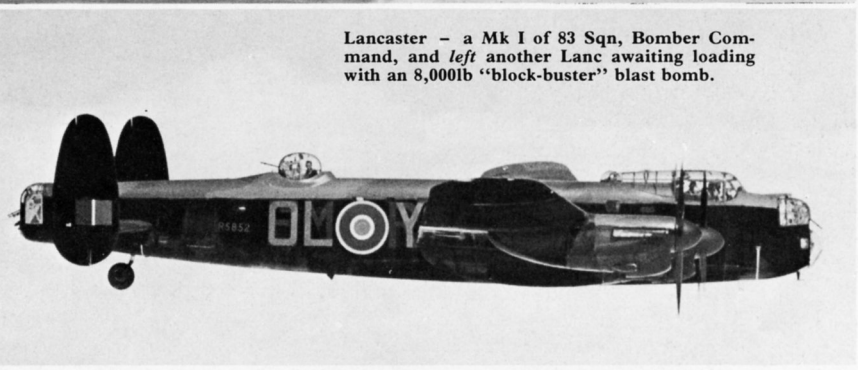
SIX OF THE BEST

Spitfire – a Mk VB of 243 Sqn, Fighter Command, and *left* a typical Mk VB re-arming scene.

Hurricane – a Mk IIC of 1 Sqn, Fighter Command, and *left* a re-arming scene featuring another Mk IIC of same unit.

Mosquito – a rocket-carrying FBVI of 143 Sqn. Coastal Command, and *left* rockets being loaded onto another FBVI of same unit.

Wellington – a Mk III of 425 (RCAF) Sqn, Bomber Command, and *left* a typical bombing-up scene.

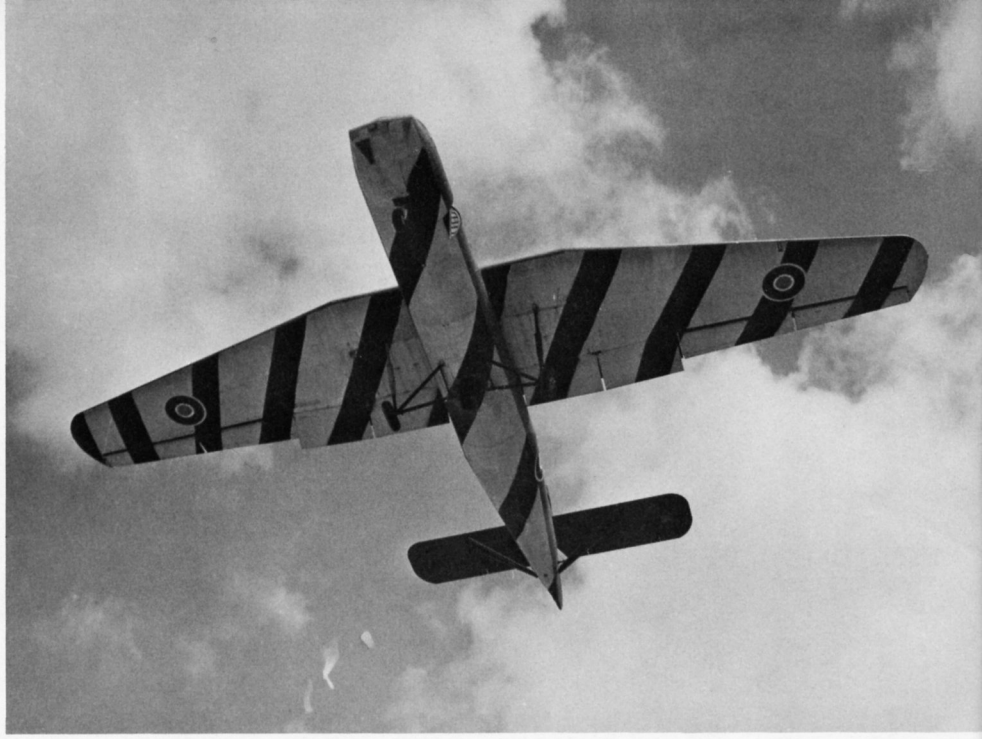


Lancaster – a Mk I of 83 Sqn, Bomber Command, and *left* another Lanc awaiting loading with an 8,000lb "block-buster" blast bomb.

Sunderland – a Mk II of 10 (RAAF) Sqn, Coastal Command, and *left* a typical depth-charge loading scene.

BEST OF THE REST

Right: The RAF's first operational troop-carrying glider, the Airspeed Horsa, exemplified by a Mk I aircraft of the Heavy Glider Conversion Unit sporting the yellow and black undersurface finish introduced for training gliders in 1942. The Horsa had a crew of two, could carry up to 25 troops or an equivalent freight load, and figured prominently in the airborne operations in Sicily and Normandy, at Arnhem and also during the Rhine crossing. *Below:* The aircraft on which most RAF pilots in WW2 learned to fly was the famous de Havilland Tiger Moth elementary trainer, here exemplified by a Tiger of 4 Elementary Flying Training School. *Bottom:* Employed as a high-altitude day bomber with 90 Squadron in 1941, the Boeing Fortress I was not a success, but later marks, with armament and other deficiences remedied, did excellent work with Coastal Command as VLR (Very Long Range) patrol bombers – a Mk IIA of Coastal's 206 Squadron is shown – and with Bomber Command's 100 Group on radio and radar countermeasures.



Above: **The insect-like-winged short take-off and landing Westland Lysander served initially as an army-co-operation aircraft – "Lizzie" LX-T, seen here, being from 225 (AC) Squadron – but was altogether too slow and poorly armed. It was thus relegated to such other jobs as air/sea rescue, target-towing, communications – and most memorably the clandestine job of transporting Allied spies to and recovering them from enemy-occupied territory.**

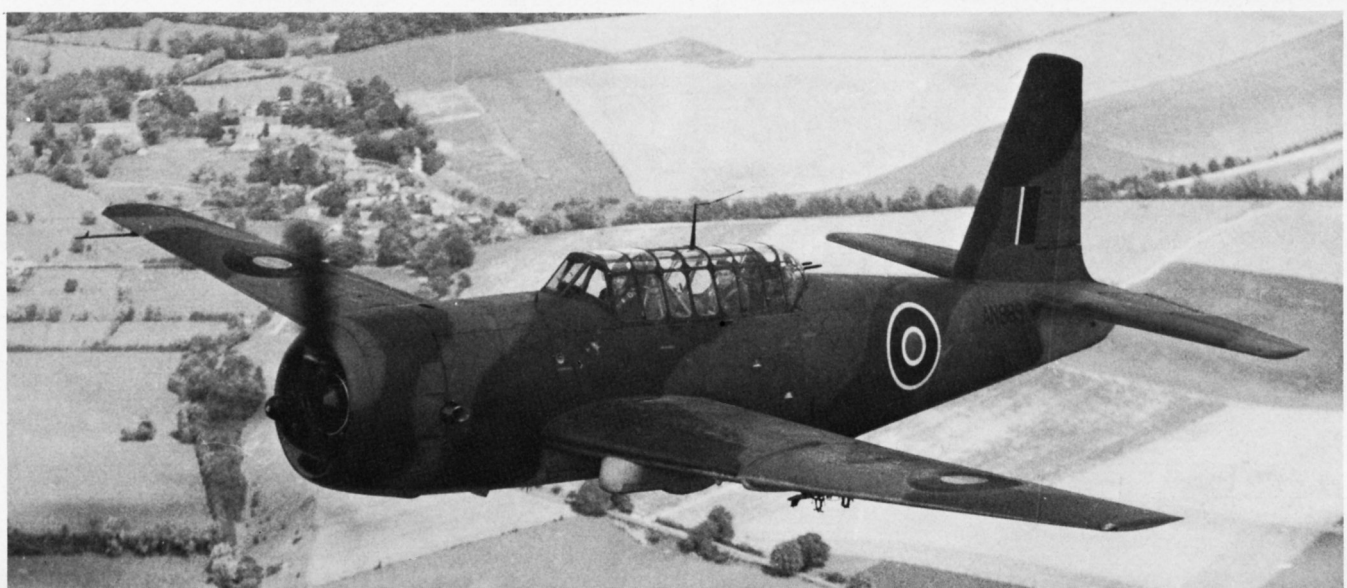
Left: **Despite a reputation for difficult handling characteristics and "hot" landings, the 300-odd mph Martin Marauder proved to be a very fine aircraft, and although only two RAF squadrons operated it – exclusively in the Mediterranean theatre – it served them well and did good work as a maritime patrol bomber – sometimes using torpedoes – and also as a tactical and strategic bomber operating against land objectives. In this pleasing study of the RAF's third Marauder Mk I the type's characteristic cigar-shaped fuselage and small wings are seen to advantage.**

Below: **Eyes of the artillery. Unarmed and with only a superb agility for its protection, the little British Taylorcraft Auster – here exemplified by a Lycoming-engined Mk IV – had the vital role in WW2 of providing a close-up picture of the battlefield by spotting for the artillery, reporting the enemy's movements and the position of his guns. It was the standard British air observation post type, its pilots in the AOP squadrons being Royal Artillery officers, the adjutant, equipment officer and all aircraft servicing personnel being RAF, while all drivers and signallers were artillerymen.**

Above: **By far the most important Allied training aircraft in WW2 was the noisy North American Harvard advanced trainer – the "flying classroom" for pilots galore. Seen here is a Harvard Mk I of 2 Flying Training School.**

Right: **Designed by the same man that designed the Spitfire, the lumbering Supermarine Walrus amphibian, or "Shagbat" as it was affectionately dubbed, did a magnificent job as an air/sea rescue plane in WW2, frequently risking interception by enemy fighters or the possibility of being destroyed by enemy mines during its heroic activities. Walrus Mk I AQ-N, seen here during a rescue exercise in 1942, belonged to 276 Squadron.**

Below: **After an inauspicious start due to teething troubles, the Vultee Vengeance divebomber – a Mk I is shown – which equipped four RAF squadrons in the Far East, became a most successful and accurate attack aircraft, bombing and strafing pin-point objectives just in front of our own troops with uncanny accuracy.**



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